

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
NEWS

JAN 28, 1976
E - 402,004

Bush facing severe test at battered CIA

By Peter Lisagor
Our Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — George Bush, the new director of the Central Intelligence Agency, faces the formidable task of rehabilitating the battered spy agency.

The 51-year-old politician-diplomat, whose appointment to the post was confirmed 64 to 27 Tuesday by the Senate, has the requisite enthusiasm for the job. His unquenchable optimism will be put to a stern test, however, for the agency is wracked with morale problems and doubts about its role in the world.

Bush will not have the problem that burdened his predecessor, William Colby, who spent most of the past few months defending the agency's operations and secrets, with limited success.

BUSH'S background in politics and diplomacy will be of some advantage to him.

While he has had no experience in intelligence, his service as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and as head of the U.S. liaison office in Peking has taught him something about the wickedness in the world and the need to keep tabs on it.

As a former Texas congressman and chairman of the Republican National Committee, he has some appreciation of congressional pride and prerogatives and of the political constraints under which any executive agency must function.

HIS NEW ENGLAND background will provide him a kinship with many CIA officials. Bush attended Phillips Academy at Andover, Mass., graduated with honors from Yale, and owns a distinguished record as a Navy combat pilot in World War II.

Bush has the manner and appearance of a perennial alumnus. The cheerful rah-rah type. But the facade is somewhat deceptive. He was born in Connecticut, the son of the late Prescott Bush, a banker who became a U.S. senator from 1952 to 1963.

Rather than "live in the shadow of a most beloved and industrious father," as he once put it, he migrated to Texas to enter the oil business, starting out as a supplies salesman and winding up as a millionaire with his own drilling firm.

BUT AT BOTTOM, Bush's first love has been politics. He lost two U.S. Senate races but was elected to two terms in the House, where he served with minority leader Gerald R. Ford.

President Nixon sent him to the UN in 1970 and brought him back to Washington to head the GOP National Committee in 1972.

Bush remained unswervingly loyal to Nixon throughout the Watergate revelations, defending him almost to the end. On the day that Nixon's complicity in the Watergate coverup was finally established, Bush sat down and wrote Nixon that the President ought to resign.

BUSH HAD HOPED that the CIA post might promote his political fortunes. But he soon learned that, if he clung to

what he called his "political birthright," he risked being rejected by the Senate. The President was compelled to put in writing that he had no intention of picking Bush as his vice presidential running mate if he should win the GOP nomination this year.

Bush is a gregarious, well-met individual, with considerable humor. He is an avid tennis player and bicyclist, a staunch advocate of physical fitness.